

USS AZ_OHC #344 Forest D. Smith 11-9-1992_01_and_02

Transcription Date: 09/23/09 - Transcriber: STA

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[BEGIN AUDIO]

INTERVIEWER: ... was conducted on November 9th, 1992 at Midway Island. The time is 10 minutes to 11:00 in the morning. The subject is Mr. Forest Smith. The interviewer is Mr. Daniel Martinez, historian for the National Park Service. This oral history project is cooperative effort of the United States Navy, [INDISCERNIBLE] Base Pearl Harbor, Barbara's Point Naval Air Station, the State of Hawaii Historic Preservation Division, and the National Park Service.

[NON-INTERVIEW]

INTERVIEWER: For the record could you please state your full and complete name?

FOREST SMITH: My name is Forest D. Smith and I'm from Winterford, Maine. I joined the Marine Core on September 8th, 1939.

INTERVIEWER: Okay Forest. What's your age right now?

FOREST SMITH: Seventy four years old going onto 75.

INTERVIEWER: And current address.

FOREST SMITH: Route 2, Box 796 Winterford Maine, 04496.

INTERVIEWER: Is it safe to say that you're a Yankee?

FOREST SMITH: Sure can.

INTERVIEWER: Where were you born?

FOREST SMITH: Westenfield. That's up in Maine in Penobscot County.

INTERVIEWER: And what was the date of birth?

FOREST SMITH: October 16th, 1918.

INTERVIEWER: How many in your family?

FOREST SMITH: Lord knows. I don't.

INTERVIEWER: You're immediate family. How many brothers and sisters?

FOREST SMITH: Well right now I've got one brother and two sisters living.

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INTERVIEWER: Okay let me rephrase the question. How many were in your family?

FOREST SMITH: Around 13.

INTERVIEWER: Thirteen children?

FOREST SMITH: Right.

INTERVIEWER: And both your parents were with you through the formative years?

FOREST SMITH: No my father died when we were real young and we actually went on to the The state took us over and then moved us around here and there. Otherwise from that

INTERVIEWER: So you lived in foster homes?

FOREST SMITH: Yes, yes I did until I graduated from high school and then I joined the Marine Core.

[NON-INTERVIEW]

INTERVIEWER: How many [INDISCERNIBLE]?

FOREST SMITH: None.

INTERVIEWER: Just you?

FOREST SMITH: Just me.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Where did you go to grammar school at?

FOREST SMITH: Well in a little one-room schoolhouse in Frankfort, Maine. And that was a one-room building and everything and then right after I graduated from there then I went to Winterford High School and graduated from there in 1936.

INTERVIEWER: When did you enlist in the Marine Core?

FOREST SMITH: September 8th, 1939.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you enlist in the Marine Core?

FOREST SMITH: nothing to do on the outside.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you choose the marines?

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FOREST SMITH: Well I'll tell you. I was at a fair in [INDISCERNIBLE], Maine and I saw two marines that were really sharp and I don't know whether they were recruiting or not but I thought right then that that would be a good outfit to be in.

INTERVIEWER: You like the uniform?

FOREST SMITH: I liked the uniform. Yes, sir.

INTERVIEWER: Did you like what the uniform did to the girls?

FOREST SMITH: Well that I never did get a chance to wear a blue uniform so I don't know how . . . I could pick up girls anyways so it didn't bother us any with that.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you go to recruit depot at?

FOREST SMITH: Paris, Island.

INTERVIEWER: What was your first day like?

FOREST SMITH: I wished they'd refused me. Just like that.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me why.

FOREST SMITH: Well I'll tell you. We had what we thought was a very good gunny sergeant or a sergeant and he was a good man and everything. Well I'll tell you when they got us off of the train at the amnesty then they took us over to the marine barracks and everything and he showed us how to make up the bunk. Well me being very innocent and everything I said . . . He asked if we'd like to have it made up again. I said yes sir I would. Well I'll tell you I got a blasting out. I learned right then and there to keep my mouth shut. So he said in so many words that . . . I mean they weren't bad words or anything but he just told me to pay attention from now on.

INTERVIEWER: Why was he upset with you? Seems like a . . .

FOREST SMITH: Well he just didn't want to make that bunk all over again. That's all. He expected you to do it that way.

INTERVIEWER: So that was your first lesson of the marine core?

FOREST SMITH: That was my first lesson.

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INTERVIEWER: What was marine boot like from that point on?

FOREST SMITH: It wasn't bad because I learned to keep my mouth shut, my eyes open, and my ears open. That's the way it goes.

INTERVIEWER: What was the most difficult part of your training?

FOREST SMITH: I can't say the training was as bad. It's being out on the parade grounds all this time. But I can't say that there was anything other than going to the rifle range or anything. It's nothing like it is today. The real drill today. We were more or less practically instilled that we were going to be in combat or something like that. Whereas today they don't think too much of that. It's all stress and physical doings.

INTERVIEWER: How difficult was the physical training?

FOREST SMITH: It wasn't too bad. I mean we'd be out there early in the morning and get back in late at night. Well not late at night. It would be day light when we arrived back to the tents. We lived in tents then. None of this barracks.

INTERVIEWER: Oh you lived in tents there?

FOREST SMITH: We lived in tents.

INTERVIEWER: How was that?

FOREST SMITH: It wasn't too bad. There was about six of us in one tent. And it wasn't bad. Of course they were very . . . You learn discipline. That was the main thing that we had to do. Listen to what they were doing and go along with what they said. They were more experienced than what we were. There's no question about it.

INTERVIEWER: When your training was completed what happened next?

FOREST SMITH: I went right over to [INDISCERNIBLE] to the third defense battalion. It was more or less over there just getting regrouped and what they were to do and everything. And that was quite an experience over there too.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about it.

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FOREST SMITH: Well I'll tell you. One thing now . . . When we were there it was just rattlesnakes and wild boars. And I know one time I went out, another fellow and I, looking for wile [INDISCERNIBLE] on a Sunday around noon they said where you been? Oh we were out bore hunting. He says where's rifle? Didn't have a rifle. He says well you're stupid to go out there without a rifle because when they charge after you why they're going to make good mince meat out of you.

INTERVIEWER: Well how did you expect to hunt a bore? What were you going to hunt him with?

FOREST SMITH: We had sticks. We didn't know any different. And we were just wondering around. Of course rattlesnakes were quite frequent there and sometimes some of the fellows would wake up with them in the bunk with them.

INTERVIEWER: Is that right?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes. They were trying to get warm and that's the only place. Nobody ever got bit or anything but we had our commanding officer, he was well Colonel [SOUNDS LIKE] Pepper and he was over six feet and he had a rattlesnake - I can send you the picture of him holding that rattlesnake up just as high as he could. The rattlesnake's nose was on the ground. He was a good sized snake.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

FOREST SMITH: Nobody ever got bit or anything. And of course there was a lot of training there with the three-inch guns. We had them down on a beach. We had 50-calibre machine guns down there and [INDISCERNIBLE] 30s. They were down there. It was a good beach to do training on.

INTERVIEWER: What happened after the training and you were in this defense battalion?

FOREST SMITH: Then we boarded ship from Charlestown, South Carolina and we came over here to [INDISCERNIBLE].

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INTERVIEWER: What was your job within the defense battalion?

FOREST SMITH: Cooking.

INTERVIEWER: Did you receive training for that?

FOREST SMITH: Nope. You learn from the older fellows. In other words if we had an old man that . . . Well not an old man but I mean an older marine and he was say been in there for 20 years or 15 years that's what you learn by.

INTERVIEWER: So you were a field cook then? Was that how they . . . How'd they write it on your papers?

FOREST SMITH: No I wasn't a field cook until I got here to Midway.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So . . .

FOREST SMITH: I was an assistant cook. Well we'd go from a striker, to a field cook, to a chief cook, and then right on up through.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you left Charlestown and you came through the Panama Canal?

FOREST SMITH: Right.

INTERVIEWER: What was that like?

FOREST SMITH: Darn not. When you've got . . . When they let the water out . . . It was bringing the water, out, vice versa and you got below and it was hot in the galley there. There's no question about it.

INTERVIEWER: Oh you were working in the galley?

FOREST SMITH: I was working in the galley at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Oh so you were assigned to the galley of the ship to feed the men?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So this was a troop ship?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah it was army troop ship. [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: I see. Did you learn a lot in that galley too?

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FOREST SMITH: Oh yes. Oh yes. You had certain things to do but you either had a chief cook over you or a field cook and of course as you went up in rank you were supposed to know somewhere near what to do on that particular deal.

INTERVIEWER: Coming through the Panama Canal where did you head from there?

FOREST SMITH: Right up the coast and stopped in San Diego.

INTERVIEWER: What'd you do in San Diego?

FOREST SMITH: Nothing. There wasn't very much time. We couldn't. We had the one night liberty and that was it.

INTERVIEWER: And then where'd you go?

FOREST SMITH: Right into Honolulu.

INTERVIEWER: How long did you get to stay here?

FOREST SMITH: Well I was then . . . I was there . . . Well let's see when did we . . . ? We arrived in May. I think June or July I headed out here with [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: Did you get some liberty in Honolulu?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Where you at marine barracks?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah well we had . . . You call them the marine barracks not where the people were stationed. But we had the wooden barracks around the parameter there.

INTERVIEWER: I see. What were some of the favorite things to do on liberty for you?

FOREST SMITH: Drink and chase the women.

INTERVIEWER: Were there lots of women?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah if you wanted to go at the right spot. You could find them.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of the right spots called in Honolulu?

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FOREST SMITH: Well let's see. There's one that was right next to the bar that we always attended to on Hotel Street. Oh golly I'll have to come back to it because I can't . . .

INTERVIEWER: Not the cottages?

FOREST SMITH: I never did go down there. I know they had cottages down on Panama Street.

INTERVIEWER: The new Senator.

FOREST SMITH: Then they had them right . . . Senator Hotel that's what it was. Hotel Senator. Because I've got a souvenir from them.

INTERVIEWER: You do? What is it?

FOREST SMITH: Huh?

INTERVIEWER: What is it?

FOREST SMITH: I haven't got it with me but it's a shape of a horseshoe with a 1941 penny in it and I got that and I carried that for a long time and I guard it with my life.

INTERVIEWER: Lots of memories there at the Senator?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes. Yeah. I mean I'll tell you it's . . . You go in . . . A bunch of the fellows would go in there and then they had a chance to pick their women. I mean there was quite a few. In fact I'll tell you this much. We had one fellow that went in there and he found his sister in there.

INTERVIEWER: What?

FOREST SMITH: His sister.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about that.

FOREST SMITH: Well I don't know too much about it. He went and walked right out and he went back and asked for a transfer. Now I don't know was it just a coincidence that he was there but he just happened to see it and they transferred him right out. I don't know where he went though from there.

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INTERVIEWER: Was he a marine?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah. He was in the third defense battalion. Told him what was going on, what went on. They transferred him.

2ND INTERVIEWER: So he went in and told what was going on.

FOREST SMITH: Yeah. He didn't do anything that night.

INTERVIEWER: I hope this question doesn't make you feel uncomfortable but see this is a lot of things that we don't know about. I mean could you tell me what kind of things in these houses?

FOREST SMITH: Well the main thing was the fact that you would go in, you'd be on the couch – just a chair and thing – and some of the girls would come over and if you saw one girl you like or anything then you would just beckon for her to come over and sit in your lap and that's all there was to it. And once you decided to give them [INDICERNIBLE] then you'd go to the room.

INTERVIEWER: Now how long did that last? I mean you were in the room for how long?

FOREST SMITH: Not over five minutes. Sometimes shorter. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Where these fairly good looking women?

FOREST SMITH: They were very nice looking girls. Very nice.

INTERVIEWER: Were these places open 24-hours a day?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Can you explain the term short-arm drill or short-arm inspection?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What is that?

FOREST SMITH: Well it's just take your penis out and stretch it back and just push it ahead. That's all there is to it. I mean the doctor wants to see if you've got any type

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of venereal disease or anything like that. But of course there again all of these cat houses were inspected by a navy doctor.

INTERVIEWER: I see. How many guys would be there? How was this done - this short-arm inspection?

FOREST SMITH: Well that was when you got back to the base. That's where that took effect.

INTERVIEWER: Would they line up the platoon or how would they do it?

FOREST SMITH: Well most of the time they'd say well if you've been on liberty we want you in to sickbay.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

FOREST SMITH: And then you . . . They knew who was on liberty because you had to sign the papers to go out.

INTERVIEWER: Wasn't that difficult for people who were pretty shy in those days?

FOREST SMITH: It didn't make any difference. It didn't make any difference. It was that you had to go through it and they were very strict. I don't know o anybody that ever got any venereal disease there in Honolulu. And there was plenty of . . . Well there's certain people would go to a certain cat house and certain cat houses had [INDISCERNIBLE] that if somebody's got a big penis . . . We had one guy that he couldn't go anywhere but this one house because they wouldn't take - they wouldn't touch him.

INTERVIEWER: Is that right?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah believe it. He was a chief cook too. I mean Steven [PH] Exacavich his name was. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So there were houses that had specialties is . . . ?

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FOREST SMITH: Oh yeah, oh yeah. And some of them were well let's see Hawaiian decent. Most of the girls were from the West Coast. They'd come in onboard the ship and they had a job.

INTERVIEWER: What other things did you do in Honolulu for ... ? Did you get to do some tourist things? Go around the island? Swim?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes yeah. We would travel down to the parks and everything. But we never ... Let's put it this way we never appreciated what there is there when we were in the service. We were going hell bent for [INDISCERNIBLE] everywhere but not looking at the real things. Because when we were there there was only three hotels.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

FOREST SMITH: And now look at them. A dime a dozen.

INTERVIEWER: Did you make your way to Waikiki and all those places?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get around the island at all?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What did you think of Honolulu in 1941?

FOREST SMITH: It was very good. It was very good. There was oh things to do and everything but we didn't appreciate them.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get a chance to look at Pearl Harbor with all the big ships and everything.

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes, oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: Quite a site?

FOREST SMITH: Yes very definitely.

[NON-INTERVIEW]

[_02 AUDIO]

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[NON-INTERVIEW]

INTERVIEWER: When did you depart Pearl Harbor for Midway?

FOREST SMITH: For Midway? I think it was around September when we came out here.

INTERVIEWER: Of what year?

FOREST SMITH: 1940.

INTERVIEWER: 1940?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: You came by troop ship?

FOREST SMITH: Right. Well no it wasn't a troop ship. It was a destroyer.

INTERVIEWER: By destroyer?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What was your first impression of Midway?

FOREST SMITH: Well I'll tell you it was just another job for us to do. That's the main thing. That's what you always did. If Uncle Sam wanted you somewhere, and it could be ever so desolate, that's where you was going to be. So you took the best of it.

INTERVIEWER: Was this place desolate?

FOREST SMITH: It sure as hell was because when we first landed here from the docks right here we had to . . . Well there was the path [INDISCERNIBLE] because the construction, the engineers I guess [INDISCERNIBLE] that was dredging a channel down there and that was the only one. And we took over the galley there and everything and we had. . . At that time the galley was situated pretty close to the beach and everything and then there was a generator plant right behind [INDISCERNIBLE] be working too and two would be idle and they would keep those going. Because every morning when we'd get up to go in to the mess hall or the

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galley there [INDISCERNIBLE] Walter Thomson he was running that and he was always [INDISCERNIBLE] every morning for us. So that started the day in there.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Now where there any troops here before you arrived? Or where you the first marines here?

FOREST SMITH: We was the first marines.

INTERVIEWER: So you were in the first marine contingent?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And what ... ? That was the third defense battalion?

FOREST SMITH: Right.

INTERVIEWER: So what kind of work did you set up and start doing here?

FOREST SMITH: Well the main thing that they were doing was to setting up, getting where they were going to put a five-inch gun or where they were going to put a three-inch gun and defense it [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: What was your specific job? What were you doing?

FOREST SMITH: I was just cooking. I only had 16 men to cook for.

INTERVIEWER: You had how many?

FOREST SMITH: Sixteen.

INTERVIEWER: That's

FOREST SMITH: That's what the first continent came out here. There was two officers and 16 enlisted men.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of things would you fix for the men?

FOREST SMITH: Fix for them?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah meals.

FOREST SMITH: Well it would be very simple. You might have a potato and a piece of meat of some kind and like that. But mostly The one that was just before me he said he never had any spam out here. And I said I can't understand why you didn't

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have spam because I cut up an awful lot of it because you didn't see it in little cans out here you saw it in big cans. And he still denies that he ever had some.

INTERVIEWER: When did things start building up out here? When did more troops start arriving?

FOREST SMITH: Well first you had Captain [PH] Taksis out here with his men. Then another one was I think it was Childsworth that came out here with another . . . Every six months that they . . . Or six weeks or something like that they'd transfer them back and forth until they got where they wanted to go. And when they got the whole the thing and then the war was . . . I mean things were boiling then and the Block, Admiral Block he said look let's get some men out here. So the whole garrison came out here then and then we stayed out here quite some time until the sixth defense relieved us then.

INTERVIEWER: Now where were your supplies coming from? Where they coming from Pearl Harbor or . . . ?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Now did that diet change? Where you starting to get more and more things and did the galley expand?

FOREST SMITH: No, no. Well there'd be a ship come in and we'd have to . . . Well it was frozen beef and we had a refrigerator there that was down to freezing temperature and everything and once they unloaded that a lot of the marines had to do the unloading too - unloading and loading. And that's what the idea was that they would act as [INDISCERNIBLES] out there.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

FOREST SMITH: Because the ships that didn't have personnel enough to take and go along with it.

INTERVIEWER: When the sixth got here you were a feeding a lot more men right?

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FOREST SMITH: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe an average meal that you would fix for these men?

FOREST SMITH: Well you would have a beef of some sort but it could be just a boiled beef. You had potatoes and you had . . . In fact the first time that I caught hell cooking. I didn't have anybody telling me how to do it or anything. Cream cauliflower. I learned damn fast. I was stirring that up. It was creamed all right. And so then this guy who was a chief cook he says I want you to understand that you don't mix it like this. He says what you do you take and cook your cauliflower, then you have a cream sauce and you put over it. So that's the way we learned from higher ups. I mean fellows that have been around. And as I say that's my first mistake that I made and I didn't make it again.

INTERVIEWER: Can you . . . ? What would dessert be like? I mean beyond the cauliflower what else would they have? Did they have milk? What kind of drinks would they have?

FOREST SMITH: Coffee mostly. Once in a while when a ship would come in they'd bring milk but it wasn't that we had milk here on the island.

INTERVIEWER: How was the water out here?

FOREST SMITH: It wasn't bad. It wasn't bad. I don't know where it came from or anything but . . . Went through a typhoon here and knocked down some of the tanks and everything that they had for the water.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah?

[INDISCERNIBLE]

FOREST SMITH: Right now?

2ND INTERVIEWER: No when you were out here?

FOREST SMITH: It was [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: Why was the coffee so bad?

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FOREST SMITH: Well they put in too much coffee. You can make the strength of your coffee by the amount of coffee you're going to put in.

INTERVIEWER: But I thought these were experienced cooks?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah but they might have had a PFC, I mean an assistant cook doing it and if they complained about it then they would check into it. But . . .

INTERVIEWER: These cooks were kind of a group onto themselves. Can you describe the overall personality of the cooks that you worked with?

FOREST SMITH: Personality-wise I think they were real good. I mean they got along good and there was no squabbling about who was doing this and that he was doing too much or anything like that. So I know on the little galley that the engineers left there . . . I had a guy by the name . . . We called him shipwreck Kelly and he was butchering with me and we had a little [INDISCERNIBLE] because they flies were something terrible.

INTERVIEWER: You had a problem with flies here?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yeah. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Now the men said occasionally they'd get bread and they thought it was raisin bread but it wasn't bread. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

FOREST SMITH: Well that was a different set of cooks. That was his cooks. Nothing like that ever happened in the third defense battalion.

INTERVIEWER: Well what happened with all those cooks? Why where they getting raisin bread? What was taking the place of the raisins?

FOREST SMITH: I don't know. I don't know. I can't say [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: Well the men claim it was bugs.

FOREST SMITH: Well yeah they will tell you anything. I would say it's absolutely no. No bugs would be in there.

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INTERVIEWER: Now was it ever impressed upon you how important was to the moral of the men?

FOREST SMITH: Absolutely. Absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: Can you share that feeling?

FOREST SMITH: Yes I do. I've cooked for 40-some-odd years and I cook at home now. Not at home at my home because the wife says either you're going to be in the kitchen or I'm going to be in there. But I cook for other outfits down there and well the last one that I cooked for was an 88-pound roasted beef and I could . . . If they'd given me a nickel for every time that they'd say well it was the best we've had, best we've had. I take pride in cooking and even did in the service. Pride. It means an awful lot.

INTERVIEWER: But there was a lot of things against you here to preparing the best meals weren't there?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes. Very definitely. I mean you had . . . If you didn't have the seasoning that's different too. I mean you've got to have . . . These fellows they have plenty of seasoning and they use it.

INTERVIEWER: Have you been back to inspect the galley here?

FOREST SMITH: No.

INTERVIEWER: Would you like to do that?

FOREST SMITH: I wanted to go in and he said well . . . And then he said well do you want a job? I said hell no I don't want a job. I'd just like to go through the galley and just see how much modern it is and what . . .

INTERVIEWER: Would you like us to arrange that for you?

FOREST SMITH: Yes I would. I'd appreciate it very much. Because I mean I'm not telling them what they should be doing, what they shouldn't be doing, and well I don't care about that. All I wanted to do is see the galley.

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INTERVIEWER: Okay. Let's move on to another subject. Besides being a cook you had a combat station. What was your combat station?

FOREST SMITH: Machine gun.

INTERVIEWER: You were on what type of machine gun?

FOREST SMITH: Well first I was on 30-calibre and then I was on the 50-calibres.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

FOREST SMITH: During the attack on Pearl Harbor I was on a 50-calibre.

INTERVIEWER: Well we'll talk about that in a minute but how close was that to the galley? Did you have to run some to get to it or ... ?

FOREST SMITH: Oh no, no. Usually we were right close to the galley.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Fairly close. Within 50 yards or less ?

FOREST SMITH: Less than that.

INTERVIEWER: Well you said the Pacific was starting to boil. That's an interesting term as you being a cook but how did you know that things were getting serious here?

FOREST SMITH: Well we went on alert . . . Well no you're going to go on something on that anyway. But we kept going on alert now and then you know and it just told you that there was going to be problems.

INTERVIEWER: And those problems came on December 7th, 1941. How did you hear the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor?

FOREST SMITH: One big bomb.

INTERVIEWER: One big bomb?

FOREST SMITH: One big bomb. I was sleeping at that time because that was my day off and when they dropped the first bomb that whole island shook like that.

INTERVIEWER: Hold on just a second. Did you leave Midway before the ... ?

FOREST SMITH: Oh hell yes. I was back there.

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INTERVIEWER: Okay you left here when the sixth came in. Correct?

FOREST SMITH: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay and you were back at Pearl Harbor at the marine barracks?

FOREST SMITH: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. I didn't know you were at Pearl Harbor. So describe to me now the events that you witnessed at Pearl Harbor.

FOREST SMITH: Well when they dropped that first bomb - now where she hit I don't know. It could have been the Arizona. And as I say I was sleeping. It was my day off from cooking and butchering and everything else so . . . Because naturally when that first bomb went off it just rocked you right out of the sack. The big mistake that they made that they didn't drop the bomb, drop a bomb, on the tanks right behind our things there. Because if they had dropped one there I probably wouldn't be here because she would have burnt everything right in the area there. Well right after that they had got the machine guns out on the parade grounds there and of course three-inch guns were useless because they sent the navy out to get some ammunition and I don't know I'm not a three-inch man but I understand that those three-inch there's a 3.5 inch. Well you can't [INDISCERNIBLE] ammunition there. Well when they got back they jammed one into the breech of the three-inch all set up on the parade ground there [INDISCERNIBLE] and they couldn't do a thing. But I was on a machine gun loading the gun.

INTERVIEWER: So you saw the planes flying by?

FOREST SMITH: I guess we did. Well in fact there was a bunch of us out right behind the barracks there. This torpedo, big torpedo bomber came over the tanks. You could see him. Right in there and he had a big torpedo on him. But we were firing at him with an O3 rifle. And evidently that was enough. He was getting close enough so he had to veer off and come in in a different direction. Well then I went to the machine

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gun out in front of the galley and started loading - helping them load ammunition. Now we had . . . I don't know . . . I think he was a captain that he wasn't the gun or anything but he was firing there and then the captain says hold your fire just a minute. Here comes one in across the field. [INDISCERNIBLE] gate coming in. And so he said hold your fire just a minute. You've got the right angle and everything. So then he told him, after he got half way over the parade ground he says okay let it go. So then he could pick his traces up and down. So when he got almost [INDISCERNIBLE] everything was pouring right into it. And he's the one that crashed into the hospital.

INTERVIEWER: Crashed into the hospital point?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah. Well he crashed into the corner of the hospital. There used to be a hospital there.

INTERVIEWER: Right. So the attack continues. Did you stay there during the whole time?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any indication of how much damage was being done?

FOREST SMITH: Yes we had a lot of fellows that had . . .

[NON-INTERVIEW]

INTERVIEWER: As the attack continued what other things . . . ? Did you stay manned at the machine gun?

FOREST SMITH: No they [INDISCERNIBLE] and I went in to galley and we had to take in the . . . Make up some . . . Well right there in the galley they closed the gate. Nobody could come and go and so we were feeding 10 to 15 thousand people there right around the clock. Everything was blacked out and everything and . . .

INTERVIEWER: Did you start this cooking even as the attack was still in progress?

FOREST SMITH: Oh no they were gone then.

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INTERVIEWER: It was over. Okay.

FOREST SMITH: See there was two times they attacked. One was 8:00 in the morning and the other one was about 9:30 or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Two separate waves.

FOREST SMITH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Did you in the following days get a chance to look and see the damage around battleship row and all around you the ships have been sunk?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of impression did that leave on you?

FOREST SMITH: Well it made you shiver and shake because mainly these fellows, the sailors that had to jump overboard and into a flaming sea of water and oil Well in fact there was one fellow, a good friend of mine up home, that he was on the Oklahoma and he says I don't know how I ever got out. He says I just got off duty. I was taking a bath. I'm in the shower and when they hit her and rolled her over and he said I don't know how I got out. He goes out through some vent that he got out through it. And he says and he had his brother. His brother got out at the same time. And they He jumped overboard because naturally that's what he had to do. In fact he was, when she was rolling over, he was running along the bottom of that ship and he jumped in and So they picked him up in a boat and took him over to the sub base and washed him down. And they said you haven't got any clothes on. He says you're not shitting me. He says I was lucky to get out with my body let alone clothes.

INTERVIEWER: So he had oil all over his body.

FOREST SMITH: All over. He was just covered with bunker sea oil. And that was the main problem there because these fellows . . . I wasn't in on it or anything but anybody, any shipmate down there, or [INDISCERNIBLE] that were down there

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helping them pull them out of the water and trying to . . . The whole area there was lined with the sailors and everything. And some of them [INDISCERNIBLE] but it was no different over there. And it was a mess really.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about the attack on Pearl Harbor personally?

FOREST SMITH: Well I think it was just a sneak attack and I can't understand why we didn't know about it.

INTERVIEWER: Were you angry? I mean at that very moment were you pretty upset with the Japanese?

FOREST SMITH: Well yes and no. I mean you didn't think too much of it. You knew that they were your enemy now so you just went along and [INDISCERNIBLE] detest them now even.

[NON-INTERVIEW]

INTERVIEWER: Forest we're going to take you back to the events of December 7th, 1941. You said that one of the Japanese planes that you were shooting and several people were shooting at crashed into the hospital area. Did you get over to see that plane and what did you find and did you take a souvenir?

FOREST SMITH: No sir. I didn't go over to find out where it was or anything. But Captain [PH] Bener had a couple, three men, go down. He says I want a part of that plane to put in front of the CO's place here. And that's where I started picking up . . . I think I was probably the fourth or fifth one there that was getting souvenirs off it.

INTERVIEWER: And what souvenir did you take?

FOREST SMITH: Well I just took a piece of the red ball. Just a small piece of it. And I carried that for quite a while.

INTERVIEWER: You also have a picture. Where did you get the picture of that wing from?

FOREST SMITH: That was made by [PH] Ty Sing Lu out of [INDSICERNIBLE].

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INTERVIEWER: Okay and you went down to his shop and purchased that?

FOREST SMITH: No. He used to come around to our barracks with different pictures and everything and we'd buy them from him.

INTERVIEWER: Now Ty Sing Lu was the official navy photographer?

FOREST SMITH: He was the official navy photographer, yes.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of fellow was he?

FOREST SMITH: Just a short Chinese man. A China man and very likeable. In fact I think he lost a lot of money in Honolulu.

INTERVIEWER: How's that?

FOREST SMITH: Well for the simple reason he'd bring in these pictures and fellows would pick them out and they wouldn't pay him. I mean I'm pretty sure that there was quite a few of them that didn't pay him.

INTERVIEWER: So the picture you have was originally gotten from Ty Sing Lu?

FOREST SMITH: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know how much you paid for that picture? Do you remember that?

FOREST SMITH: Probably 15 cents.

INTERVIEWER: I see. But that picture means a lot to you right?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: Along with your memento.

FOREST SMITH: Well that does too. I mean I've shown it around and in fact I think shall donate it to your unit here and so that you can have it and put it

INTERVIEWER: At the Arizona Memorial Museum?

FOREST SMITH: Arizona Memorial.

INTERVIEWER: That'd be terrific. Is there any other events of Pearl Harbor that you'd like to talk about that we didn't cover?

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FOREST SMITH: No all I can say is that we were busy there for about, well four days, when they would not allow anybody in or out. And of course anybody that was stuck in there we had to feed them 24-hours a day.

INTERVIEWER: How much did you work during that time period?

FOREST SMITH: Possibly eight, ten hours a day. We were wherever that we had to cut up the meat we'd cut up a ton of meat a day just to feed them and [INDISCERNIBLE]. We'd have access . . . We'd cut up the beef and then they'd put it in a stock pot there and have to bring it out. I mean cook it.

INTERVIEWER: So you were real busy in the galley during that time period?

FOREST SMITH: Very much so. Very much so.

INTERVIEWER: When did you get orders to go to Midway?

FOREST SMITH: Well that was in about April when we headed for Midway. We were on the [PH] Kitty Hawk - USS Kitty Hawk - which was a big thing that . . . A big ship and all it was . . . You could drive a whole railroad car right in it. We had tanks and we had aircraft and well a lot of high octane gas for the planes.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about coming back to Midway? You'd already been here once.

FOREST SMITH: Well it was just a place where Uncle Sam wanted me to go. That's all I can say. I mean wherever Uncle Sam wanted me to go that's where I went.

INTERVIEWER: But in light of what had happened at Pearl Harbor you were going even further away. Did you worry what was going to happen out here maybe to you?

FOREST SMITH: No.

INTERVIEWER: Didn't think about it?

FOREST SMITH: No, no. And when I got through with this one the next was the Philippines and that didn't bother me.

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INTERVIEWER: Well let's talk about this one. You arrived at Midway what time of the year?

FOREST SMITH: I think it was April, in April, that we got here. And then they unloaded . . .

INTERVIEWER: April of 1942.

FOREST SMITH: Yes just before the Battle of Midway. Because then they had to unload of course and get things straightened around and placed where they wanted. A lot of people didn't know about the tanks coming in here. Well I didn't either. I never saw them unload them or anything. But I do know that they had them here as a platoon of tanks over there and over here too.

INTERVIEWER: How did the galley change since you had left?

FOREST SMITH: How what?

INTERVIEWER: How did the galley change? Was it bigger now? Was it in a different area since the time before?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Well describe to me what the galley was like?

FOREST SMITH: Well when I came here the galley was further in of the island here and then I was transferred immediately right out of here right over to Eastern Island. That's where that I did all of my work.

INTERVIEWER: So you were initially here the first trip at Sand Island and now you went to Eastern Island?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What was that like over there?

FOREST SMITH: Oh just a little shack that we had but we fed all of the men on the island and everything and that morning we fed all the aviators. We fed all of the

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personnel because they had to get out of the galley because evidently they had [INDISCERNIBLE] which they did.

INTERVIEWER: Well you're talking about the morning of the attack on Midway.

FOREST SMITH: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What kind of preparations however did you see leading up to the Battle of Midway.

FOREST SMITH: I didn't see any.

INTERVIEWER: Is that right?

FOREST SMITH: I couldn't see any. No, sir.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have any special orders about how the galley was to be run and what kind of ... ?

FOREST SMITH: No because there was somebody over me running the galley and that morning I got through around 3:00 boning out these shoulders and they were all in stock pots and everything. And then well then they started bombing and everything just boom, boom, boom.

INTERVIEWER: Okay well let's make sure we got this in a chronological order. I'm going to go back a little. Describe to me your day, your personal day on the Battle of Midway on June 4th, 1942 starting from the very start of that day.

FOREST SMITH: Okay well I was in the galley. Well I didn't get in the galley until about oh probably 12:00 that night.

INTERVIEWER: Okay came in at midnight.

FOREST SMITH: At midnight, yes. And I went in there and started . . . I mean that was my job – to bone them out. Because I had all of my own knives and everything that we bought in Honolulu. And then at 3:00 I went off and [INDISCERNIBLE] of my bunker and went to sleep. Well I started to go to sleep and then about oh I'd say around 8:00 when the siren sounded then we came out of there and I came out of

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there. And my buddy had dug a foxhole down on the beach just opposite the galley. But now when we were over there yesterday I see that they put up a barrier there which you couldn't go over. That's been put in since the war. Well anyway we went down there in the foxhole and of course then they were bombing.

INTERVIEWER: When you went down to your foxhole and the battle started can you describe what you saw down there?

FOREST SMITH: Well you know if I was an artist I could . . . There was a big cloud up there and all of a sudden six of these planes, six or seven of these planes, come out in a V formation and I thought well God they've opened the door there. And then right after that one of the gun crews - I think it was Sea Battery - shot the lead plane right out. And I recollect that I heard afterwards that the guy - the lieutenant that was in charge of that battery - got court marshaled because he wasn't supposed to fire until about say 20 seconds. Because they, the way I understand it is the range limit of the three-inch is 30 seconds. So they started counted 30, 29, 28, 27, and when they got down to 25 he said fire and they did and they picked out the lead plane. And then all hell broke loose because then they swing right in and started dive bombing.

INTERVIEWER: Describe what kind of hell broke loose.

FOREST SMITH: Hitting my galley the way that they did. They hit it probably six times. Dropped six bombs there. One here and here and here and here. I mean it was good bombing and everything. And then the last bomb that they had evidently they hit the water tower there and knocked that out. And of course when they knocked that out why it just a lot of the water came down on us and . . .

INTERVIEWER: Oh it did?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes. And so it wasn't a very big water tower but it was good enough for the galley. Well we just put our rifle down like that because we could see

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the sand coming at us and everything so we put the rifle down and just held on like that and it covered us over a little bit with some sand but otherwise from that, no.

INTERVIEWER: How far were you from the galley?

FOREST SMITH: I would say 150 feet. Just with my visual thinking right now.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a helmet on?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes, yeah. Well the old World War I helmets.

INTERVIEWER: Was it just you in the foxhole or were there other people?

FOREST SMITH: No another fellow. Two of us.

INTERVIEWER: And do you remember who that was?

FOREST SMITH: No I don't. I don't.

INTERVIEWER: So how'd you feel when they blew your galley up?

FOREST SMITH: Well it was an awful mess. That's all I could say and the funny part of it was there was a communication underground there and some lieutenant or something got blasted. I don't know what his name was but it killed him. Then this fellow that was in the communication end of it, he had a broken leg. So he got the hell out of there. He just deserted because he didn't know that was the safest place there was. Just as they say well lightning strikes twice but it won't strike twice in the same spot. That's what they say. And that's just about what happened there. When they started bombing why they just used up the bombs that's all.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a fire?

FOREST SMITH: No there wasn't.

INTERVIEWER: Were your butcher knives in that building?

FOREST SMITH: No I'd take them with me alright. I had a bunker just a little ways way form that and I always took my knives with me. They went with me and in fact I still got some of them.

INTERVIEWER: You still have some of them too?

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FOREST SMITH: Oh yes. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: [INDISCERNIBLE] do you recall?

FOREST SMITH: Well it wasn't very long because not as far as the island was being bombed. I'd say probably an hour or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: Now I understand and American dive bomber flew back in the middle of the attack. Can you tell me about that?

FOREST SMITH: Well there was . . . One bomber came by along the beach there. We were firing at - not him - but the Japanese. There was a Japanese zero right on his fanny and he was just rocking her back and forth coming in. Well evidently . . .

INTERVIEWER: How high was he?

FOREST SMITH: Probably 100 feet. I don't know if he was that high because he was coming over very low. He had his wheels down and everything. He evidently swung around to come in and land because the north end, what I'd call the north end, that's where they would land. And [INDISCERNIBLE] was right on him and he was too low for what he was doing and he crashed on the runway.

INTERVIEWER: Who crashed on the runway?

FOREST SMITH: The Japanese. Because the other plane, which is a slower plane, could land there and when he landed he just ducked out while the other zero was on his way by him by that time, the time that he landed. And then he crashed at the . . . There was one runway coming down this way. Another one going that way. He crashed there. They caught him in a fire.

INTERVIEWER: Crossfire?

FOREST SMITH: Crossfire. And well his engine landed when it came off and everything from that spot there when he hit it landed way down to the end at Sea battery's gun positions.

INTERVIEWER: Was the pilot killed instantly?

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FOREST SMITH: Oh yes. Yeah. I don't know whatever happened to him.

INTERVIEWER: Now you had this propensity for getting souvenirs. Did you get a souvenir from that plane?

FOREST SMITH: No. No I didn't. Well I knew he crashed and everything but then the whole idea was to get into a safe spot and I just grabbed a bunk and I slept outdoors down by the three-inch gun grove. Then that night too there was a Japanese sub that lobbed one shell over here. And that was just a signal of him going down. They had what they called a J-line here on that island. And then when they gave the word for that – they gave a password for that J-line [INDECIPHERABLE] which was three-inch hooked in, five-inch hooked in, search lights hooked in. Everything. All the batteries. Well he was on the ... well we'll say the south side of the island there and he fired one shell. Well then they called for the J-line to snap in. Everything was And just as soon as that light went on to him they let loose with everything that they had and it blew him right out of the water. So I heard – this is only hearsay from the fellows from that side of the island – but they said they saw him lift right out of the water. Because you had Well five-inch I don't think fired at it but the three-inch were all around there.

INTERVIEWER: So what'd you do for a galley after this was all over?

FOREST SMITH: I was just about ready to head back to Honolulu so I don't know what they did. I think they had another galley that they were building or something. But where my galley was I did notice that there is a galley there. I mean there was one. And the power plant was there which wasn't there when I was over there.

INTERVIEWER: But I mean after the attack you had to feed these guys still didn't you?

FOREST SMITH: Well that was another group. What I mean another bunch of cooks. I wasn't classified as a cook at that time.

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INTERVIEWER: Okay. So even after the few days after the Battle of Midway what did you do then?

FOREST SMITH: Well I just wandered around and did whatever they wanted me to do. If they wanted me to peel potatoes I'd peel potatoes. And then we got onboard ship and headed back into Pearl and my outfit had gone to Guadalcanal, shipped out to Guadalcanal, and I begged for them to let me go too. But they said no it's too late. We're going to ship you up the other way. So I went up to Guam and from Guam I went into the Philippines. Philippines into Oka [PH] Nawa.

INTERVIEWER: So where your war ended or did you go ... ?

FOREST SMITH: That's where my war ended.

INTERVIEWER: So you were there on VJ Day?

FOREST SMITH: Yes.

2ND INTERVIEWER: [INDISCERNIBLE] plane that was falling [INDISCERNIBLE] was it shot down or did it crash?

FOREST SMITH: It crashed. He was too low to the runway and somehow [INDISCERNIBLE] but they did catch him too in a crossfire with 50-calibres.

2ND INTERVIEWER: Forest let's go back to sometime in '40 when the typhoon hit Midway. What do you remember about that?

FOREST SMITH: I remember it was hell because we . . . In fact I haven't got it with me. I've got a poem that Sam [PH] Taksis wrote and I'll see that you people get a copy of it. It tells exactly what had happened just the way that he saw it. I mean when . . . Well Major Roberts was out here. He was the commanding officer of us out here. Pepper never made it out here. And anyway this one here says that . . . We didn't have gas tanks then either. It was all in 55-gallon drums. And right behind our galley down there was the power house. There was four generators there and they'd operate two for a certain length of time and then they'd switch over.

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2ND INTERVIEWER: How long did the typhoon last would you guess?

FOREST SMITH: One day.

INTERVIEWER: Were the winds real strong?

FOREST SMITH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Lot's of rain?

FOREST SMITH: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How did you protect yourself?

FOREST SMITH: Not so much rain as it was waves coming over the reef out there.

And when they would hit that reef they'd land, that wave, would land on dry land and that's what we had to . . . In fact most of us went up on next to the cable station. That was the highest spot. Of course you had your guard duty down there but they had to be careful too for getting washed overboard or anything.

INTERVIEWER: Any damage here?

FOREST SMITH: Not too much. Well of course [INDISCERNIBLE] to do any damage to. I mean of course the galley there but that didn't do any harm there.

INTERVIEWER: Did you stay with the cooking contingent the rest of your World War II career?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes. I started in and well let's see I started in Hilton Head and then I kept going from there on . . .

INTERVIEWER: All the way through.

FOREST SMITH: All the way through.

INTERVIEWER: When did you leave the military?

FOREST SMITH: 1945. Well really it was '47 because I went into the marine reserves and then when they got my name in there for career I said the hell with this. I was going to get out because I had a pregnant wife and I just bought a farm for \$15,000. Today it's maybe worth \$100,000.

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INTERVIEWER: Do you still have the farm?

FOREST SMITH: I still have it.

INTERVIEWER: Is it in Maine?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah. I've had chances to sell house lots there and everything but I don't want anybody around me. There's a [INDISCERNIBLE] all the way around that piece of land. And I did sell oh maybe three house lots there. Well in fact gave them away. Today they'd be worth \$2000 and I gave them for \$500. So . . .

INTERVIEWER: Is it safe to say you like living in islands?

FOREST SMITH: No.

INTERVIEWER: Well you've kind of built an island away from people out there haven't you?

FOREST SMITH: Well yes but there's cars going up and down and all the way around.

INTERVIEWER: You had a question?

2ND INTERVIEWER: Yeah. I was curious that you save souvenirs during the Pearl Harbor thing. That you were smart enough to do that. You must have had a sense that history was being made in that moment. Could elaborate on that?

FOREST SMITH: No. I don't understand what . . .

2ND INTERVIEWER: Did you tell me that [INDISCERNIBLE]?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah you save a memento at Pearl Harbor and the question is did you realize that you were living through a historic moment and that's why you took that piece?

FOREST SMITH: No, no I don't. Well in fact I had two pieces and one guy that wrote East Wind Rain - have you seen that one on Pearl?

INTERVIEWER: Mm hmm. Stan Cohen.

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FOREST SMITH: Stan Cohen. He wanted a piece of that. And I says I'll tell you what you do. This was a green part one of the other ends of it. I says I'll tell you what I'll do Stan, I'll send you one if you give me another book so I can put it in the schools. He did. I sent it out to him and no this one here that I [INDISCERNIBLE] real meatball in that.

INTERVIEWER: So why did you go over and pick up a piece?

FOREST SMITH: Oh if you could see my place and my house there the wife says how come you picked this up, and you pick that up, and you'll save this and save that. Well I says some day it's going to be worth something. I mean maybe I won't get any money out of it. In fact I've got one that I showed you on the first day cancellation on the Midway Island. I've given the original one there down to Paris Island Museum. And if I can get him to where they're going to do some good and show people that's the main idea.

INTERVIEWER: So that's the Yankee in you right?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah, yeah. I won't be able to take them with me so I'm going to . . .

2ND INTERVIEWER: So you must have been knowing that history was going on? You must have known the value in that right?

FOREST SMITH: Well yes.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about that.

FOREST SMITH: I can't explain anything about the value of it at that time because I'll tell you when you are young and full of piss and vinegar you don't think about what is in the future on these things. You think right now. So that's what I want.

INTERVIEWER: Some people have said that Midway was a crossroads for their life. Is that true of you?

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FOREST SMITH: No. Bed bugs. I'll tell you I was going into the head over there and I saw one of the biggest cockroaches I ever saw. And who was it in charge ... ?

INTERVIEWER: Ashton?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah. He took a picture of it. I said well golly let me knock him down so you can get a real good picture of it. Boy that thing was that big. And I'd never seen any cockroaches over here. Now when I get home the wife won't let me take that suitcase in that house because if I tell her there were cockroaches over there.

2ND INTERVIEWER: Did you take one of those home?

FOREST SMITH: What's that?

2ND INTERVIEWER: As a souvenir?

FOREST SMITH: The cockroach?

2ND INTERVIEWER: The roach.

FOREST SMITH: Hell no.

2ND INTERVIEWER: [INDISCERNIBLE]

FOREST SMITH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How did you change in World War II? Do you think your character and personality changed a little because ...?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah I think so. It was a good experience for the fact that when I was going through school I couldn't get up. I couldn't talk to maybe three or four people. I mean eh I'd just clam right up. And then with the given orders in the service and everything why it came out of it and hell I can talk to even general, colonels, any of them. I mean they don't bother me. I mean a lot of people will stand there and shake when they listen to somebody high up. That doesn't bother me any. I talk to them.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see Admiral [PH] Nimitz when he came to visit?

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FOREST SMITH: No sir. He didn't visit the galley. He didn't get near. But he was more or less interested in the gun positions there.

INTERVIEWER: Well I guess what you told me is what you got out of the service that helped you in later life.

FOREST SMITH: Oh definitely. Definitely.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think you lost though during this time that you served? Did you loose anything?

FOREST SMITH: No, no. I got to know discipline with the marines and that is a big it. Now whether they instilled into these young fellows the idea that once you're marine you're always a marine. I been known for that way all the way.

INTERVIEWER: Not only are they instilling that in young fellows; they're instilling that in young women. How do you feel about women in the marines?

FOREST SMITH: Dames?

INTERVIEWER: Yes sir.

FOREST SMITH: Well they've got a job to do and then what the hell that's no different than having women on the outside. You know I can't say that they're a detriment to the service.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you come back to Midway?

FOREST SMITH: Because I just wanted to see what changes have been made.

INTERVIEWER: And what changes have been made?

FOREST SMITH: The whole island build up. There's no . . . We didn't have well any pavements on any of these things. We walked right through the boonies. And that's [INDISCERNIBLE] we'd go from that side to that side. You wouldn't stumble into a tree [INDISCERNIBLE] a tree.

INTERVIEWER: How did you like your trip to Eastern Island yesterday?

FOREST SMITH: I think it was wonderful.

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INTERVIEWER: Was that what you were kind of expecting?

FOREST SMITH: Yes. Well when they said there's nobody over there it was kind of hard to find some of the things where you try to pick out. Like I couldn't find any . . . I found one big runway but that's about the only one that I found over there.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of private thoughts were you having over there? What were you thinking about?

FOREST SMITH: Over there?

INTERVIEWER: Yes sir.

FOREST SMITH: Let's see. What was I talking about? Oh I was just telling them that it's changed so much that . . .

INTERVIEWER: No but your own personal thoughts. What were you thinking when you went there? And I saw you were out there. You were out there alone looking around. What were you thinking about?

FOREST SMITH: Well I was looking to see where the galley was. That was main idea. And golly if we'd had that many gooney birds over there we could have . . . Well of course we did kill a lot of them but at least we took care of them. And [INDISCERNIBLE].

INTERVIEWER: Does it concern you about the plight of the gooney birds out there?

FOREST SMITH: Yes it is. It is.

INTERVIEWER: Are you going to write somebody about it?

FOREST SMITH: Well I think if I knew who to write to I certainly would.

INTERVIEWER: [INDISCERNIBLE] congressmen would be a good one.

FOREST SMITH: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: A lot of plastic killing those birds isn't it?

FOREST SMITH: Huh?

INTERVIEWER: A lot of plastic killing those birds.

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FOREST SMITH: That's what is killing them. They're not getting any food. And they're eating up all the plastic. It seems though that there's enough of them over there to get all that they've . . . They've got to have something to do to clean up that plastic.

INTERVIEWER: How did you and the gooney birds get along when you were here in Midway?

FOREST SMITH: Good, good.

INTERVIEWER: Did you talk to them?

FOREST SMITH: Oh yes. Well in fact I talked to one yesterday and he just nipped me a little bit though. So you just have got to be careful with them that's all. But I've never had any one of them bite me on the legs or anything like that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have some that just hung around the galley? Did you give them scars or . . . ?

FOREST SMITH: No, no. No they were always in and around the bushes and everything.

INTERVIEWER: When you see the phrase [INDISCERNIBLE] or the USMC logo what's that do to you inside?

FOREST SMITH: Well it boils you a little bit because it's just like the if you go to college you have your own school song. Well to me that signified.

INTERVIEWER: That's your school song right?

FOREST SMITH: Uh huh.

INTERVIEWER: That's your school song right?

FOREST SMITH: Yeah. That's right. It might have been school of hard knocks but nevertheless we took them as they went. You know that of course the marines have changed a lot too with the fact that now we used to have one marine core band. The marine core band now is, well not the one that plays the [INDISCERNIBLE] but the

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marine core band itself it's just musicians outside. When you can take and bring a woman in to play a saxophone or something like that and make her a master sergeant why that's where it is. But the old real marine core bands you know like Paris Island. I imagine they've got one in San Diego. Then of course you've got the one at Eighth and [INDISCERNIBLE] Street.

INTERVIEWER: So I'm hearing from you you kind of miss the old traditions of Marine Core.

FOREST SMITH: Yes I do. Very much. But it's one of those things you've got to live with. That's all.

INTERVIEWER: Well I want to thank you for your interview. It was very, very enlightening for all of this morning.

FOREST SMITH: Well I hope I gave you some history anyway.

INTERVIEWER: You sure did. Thank you very much.

FOREST SMITH: Okay.

[END AUDIO]

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